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Faculty Development: An Historical Perspective

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On this program concerned with faculty development I have been asked to speak about the past, when there was no concept of faculty development as we know it and little concern on the institution's part or on the profession's for the growth and continuing vitality of the teaching staff. It was an age of unshared authority and of free enterprise where some succeeded and others failed, and no one cared to know why.

My brief account of more than 300 years of educational history may induce a comparative euphoria, and in that sense it belongs to the end of this conference. There are, however, tucked away in the account some continuing dilemmas which should not be overlooked.

The society which founded the first American college, Harvard, was a primitive, agrarian community, dominated by religious convictions which had a strong intellectual base. The college aimed to educate the leaders of public life by providing a reasoned ground for faith, rooted in the Scriptures, together with training in logical argumentation and some exposure to the liberal arts, defined as mathematics, descriptive science, and ancient languages. When Harvard began there were no more than nine students. Of the three faculty members, one was the master, Nathaniel Eaton—an unworthy character, as it turned out, though well versed in Classics and Theology. The other two were his assistants, called tutors. Before long, the General Court had sentenced Eaton to pay one of them 30 £ "for the wrong done him" (quoted in Morison, *Founding,* page 235) as the record reads. The fact provides interesting evidence about the relation of faculty and administration in our early col-

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legiate history. Luckily, Eaton was soon disposed of, and after an interval the college reopened with Thomas Dunster as first President.

Unlike Eaton, Dunster had an M.A., although in those days the degree represented elapsed time rather than profound study. The normal requirements comprised reading in the library, responding to philosophical propositions in public and submitting an integrated synopsis of the Arts, plus, of course, good conduct. Dunster, like Eaton, had two assistants about whom he complained, as did other early presidents. Their unsettledness and changing, he said, meant that "ever and anon all the work committed to them falleth agen on my shoulders" (Morison, *17th Century*, I, page 15).

The course of study established by Dunster, similar to that in English universities of the time, consisted of an examination of traditional texts whose arguments the student learned to reproduce and summarize. It was the responsibility of the tutor to see that the student mastered the lessons set and that his behavior met the college standards. To enforce the latter, the tutors were required to eat in hall with students and to sleep in the same room or nearby. Clearly, the faculty task in those days was not simply intellectual, but involved concern for the life-style and personal convictions of students as well.

In general, these young faculty had just completed the B.A. themselves. Indeed, as late as 1786 John Quincy Adams could write to his father, the President, "the tutors are so very young" (quoted in Morison, *Three Centuries,* page 179). The tutors were given no special training, on the assumption that anyone could teach the texts who had successfully mastered them himself. A tutor was normally assigned to an entering class to which he taught all the subjects in the curriculum under the direction of the president. To those instructors who survived the four-year course, it was the custom, at least at Harvard, to present a piece of solid silver plate. But very few achieved this distinction. In the period 1783–1811 Samuel Eliot Morison, the Harvard historian, reports that out of 42 tutors appointed only 13 stayed more than three years (Morison, *Three Centuries,* page 179). At Yale, one noteworthy character, named in 1706, lasted for seven years, although the average term there from 1701 to 1740 was two and one-half years (Warch, pages 49, 245).

In the 18th century American college teaching was hardly a profession in the sense of being a hierarchical development according

to established standards. Instead, it was more often a dead-end job, held only until something better came along. Few of the early presidents of American colleges had been tutors themselves, although there were some exceptions. Among them were Samuel Johnson, president of what later became Columbia, Jonathan Edwards, president of Princeton, and John Leverett, president of Harvard. Since the curriculum was defined by tradition and subject to community scrutiny by way of public examinations, there were few opportunities to modify it, even surreptitiously. Nevertheless, the early histories of both Harvard and Yale mention the gradual influence of Newton and of Locke on the topics offered for discussion at Commencement. Newton's *Principia* appeared in 1687. Shortly thereafter, and by 1718 at Yale, changes were apparent in the phrasing of propositions for debate at both institutions. Of great significance too was the telescope which Governor Winthrop's son presented to Harvard in 1772 after having been urged to do so by the secretary of the Royal Society who wanted him "to season and possess the youth of New England with this real experimental way of acquiring knowledge" (see Morison, *17th Century*, I, page 219). Such a way was not the usual method fostered by the contemporary curriculum. No wonder Winthrop's descendant of the same name caused perturbations in Boston when he attributed the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 to natural causes rather than to the intervention of Deity. This John Winthrop was a scientist, not a divine or classical scholar. Even the members of the Royal Society itself, largely gentlemen scholars who pursued science as an avocation, were to find that the increasing complexities of the subject began to require restriction for the attainment of competence.

By 1767 this tendency came to be reflected in the tutor appointments made at Harvard and other colleges. From that date faculty positions implied responsibility for a single area, e.g., Greek, Latin, Logic, and Mathematics, although all were expected to give instruction in Rhetoric and English Composition (see Morison, *Three Centuries*, page 90). Acceptance of a field of special competence for college teaching was greatly increased by the vast prestige of the German Universities as the 19th century began. There research and specialization formed the basis of the educational program which aimed not at producing cultured gentlemen of high religious and moral principle to serve as community leaders, but rather at form-

ing experts in defined fields who mastered a single area of learning and were equipped to add to it by their own studies. Such experts emerged in natural science, in Biblical criticism, and in historical and philological areas. With the development of this kind of specialization, it soon became apparent that no teacher, however competent, could instruct in all aspects of the curriculum. There was too much to know.

It was some time, however, before the American colleges drew the full consequences for the curriculum and for faculty development. Francis Wayland, president of Brown from 1827 to 1855, urged different programs on the colleges, and particularly sought to establish new criteria for the appointment of tutors. In a few years, he said, a tutor "attains to all the knowledge which, owing to the fixed nature of our system, he is able to communicate. Beyond this his calling presents him no reason for advancing" (Hofstadter and Smith, I, page 353). Clearly, college teaching was not yet a profession in which levels of distinction could be attained and recognized. Wealthy patrons of the university established professorships in special fields, but it was some years before a tutor could aspire to promotion to one of these chairs. His position was not yet perceived as being a training period for the professorship.

From cursory examination of faculty appointments at Harvard and Yale, it becomes obvious that the demands of genuine specialization were seldom recognized. Benjamin Silliman, a student of law and member of the Class of 1796 at Yale, was offered a teaching position in Georgia in the summer of 1801. Chancing to meet the president of Yale, Timothy Dwight, on a New Haven street, he presented his problem. To his surprise, Dwight urged him to refuse the offer. Yale, the president told him, was about to establish a professorship in Chemistry and Natural History which he could have if he would agree to give up the law and become a chemist (Wolfle, page 5). After two years at the University of Pennsylvania and some months in Europe, Silliman assumed his new duties at Yale and became one of the best known chemists of his day. In similar fashion, Edward Everett (Harvard, Class of 1811), now remembered chiefly as the other speaker at Gettysburg, was offered the professorship of Greek at Harvard on his 21st birthday with the proviso that he spend the first two years of the appointment on full salary in European study (Morison, *Three Centuries,* page 225). While still a

student at Göttingen, Everett's colleague, George Ticknor, was appointed Professor of French and Spanish at Harvard. Even as late as 1870, President Eliot could make Henry Adams Professor of History there, quieting Adams' remonstrance that he was not an historian by saying "If you will point out to me anyone who knows more, Mr. Adams, I will appoint him" (Adams, page 294).

Not only were young, unseasoned men named to the new specialized fields, but some, once appointed, were soon shifted to teaching responsibilities in other areas. In 1879 Arthur Twining Hadley was hired to instruct in Greek at Yale; the following year he taught Latin. But from 1881 to 1883, he was assigned to German, at the same time teaching Roman Law and Logic, though his field of competence and interest was Political Economy (Rudolph, *Curriculum,* page 144). Earlier, Francis Bowen, head of the Class of 1833 at Harvard, became tutor in Philosophy. Then, after four years at that, he taught English Constitutional History, Modern European History, and Greek History, finally becoming Professor of Natural Religion, Moral Philosophy and Civil Polity in 1853 (Morison, *Three Centuries,* page 292f).

In staffing the land grant colleges, which by their founding act were obligated to offer instruction in Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts, similar casual recognition to actual expertise was frequent. There were, after all, few Americans with training in the scientific and theoretical aspects of Agriculture. In Europe, which possessed no virgin lands to accommodate expanding populations and their food needs, it had been necessary to understand soil chemistry and other aspects of farming much earlier. Some Americans knew of the work of the German chemist Justus Liebig and had studied with him at Giessen or Munich, but there were not enough of these young experts to provide faculty for the Morrill Act colleges. It could therefore happen that in the early years of one of these institutions a professor of Classics would find himself obligated to teach Agriculture despite his lack of study in the field (see Ross, page 87). Wilson Smith summarized the faculty problem in Agriculture when he wrote "there was little study of cows in public cow colleges until almost half a century after most of them began" (Smith, page 302). Indeed, only after 1910 did enrollments in Agriculture actually increase (Cheit, page 44).

In his history of the college curriculum, Frederick Rudolph points to 1892 as the date when "control of the Harvard faculty shifted

from locally rooted, non-specialized, institutionally loyal academic gentlemen to somewhat more socially heterogeneous, highly specialized, intensely competitive professional academics" (quoted from Robert McCaughey, Rudolph, page 155). This professionalization of the college faculty was not unrelated to the free-elective system characteristic of American colleges at the end of the 19th century. Any concept of an accepted core was rejected in favor of fuller exploitation of individual tastes and talents in the public service. At least this was Eliot's rationale for the free elective system for undergraduates. He was less aware of the necessity for providing facilities for the research and professional development of the faculty in his highly individualistic curriculum. Nevertheless, the need for trained experts in the technologically developing United States and the influence of European scholarship began to expand graduate and professional education. In 1900 there were 5,831 graduate students in American universities; by 1950 there were 237,208 (Harris, page 294). The successes of applied science in those 50 years tended to establish the sequential course structure as the norm for all fields and research in these areas as the model for all research efforts.

One result was the increasing emphasis on a major field, already prefigured in the free elective system, and a degree of neglect for other portions of the curriculum. Faculty accepted this specialization and agreed to mutual evaluation at least partially on the basis of contributions to scholarship which, being set down in print, were easier to appraise than the less defined concept of good teaching.

As far back as 1885 the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche had pointed to the dangers of overspecialization. In *Zarathustra* he described the scholar who knows only the brain of the leach. "That is my kingdom," says the learned man. "My intellect's conscience demands that I know one thing and nothing else." (dass ich Eines weiss und sonst alles nicht weiss) (Nietzsche, page 364).

It took two World Wars until the shapers of college curricula began to realize that the validity which specialized knowledge enjoyed was not in itself a sufficient goal of higher education. At Columbia after World War I, and at Harvard after World War II, efforts were made to find larger frameworks within which specialized knowledge could contribute to a general understanding of contemporary society. Such a task required a different faculty or at least an effort to develop different faculty characteristics from those nurtured by the usual doctorate. But faculty development was still

an unknown term and the intellectual world held with Max Weber that only specialized knowledge had validity. Accordingly, the aims of general education as enunciated by the Harvard Red Book, "a supreme need of American education is for a unifying purpose and idea" (page 43), were realized only in individual instances. It is significant too that Daniel Bell writing in review of the Columbia program twenty years after the Harvard statement can still say, albeit with a degree of wistfulness, "the college is the stronghold, perhaps the last, of the unity of knowledge" (Bell, page 67). Experience seemed to show that the integrative, interpretive capacities required to defend the stronghold were found in the seasoned scholars in whom the desire to advance their own specialized fields tended to conflict with the requirements of general education. Perhaps this tension was constructive and accounts for the difficulties encountered by successors who, though well-trained, were less successful in maintaining the quality of general education than the older scholars.

Blame is not to be imputed here. The culture itself provided no synthesis, no unifying idea, no framework except individual ones. Lacking the overarching faith of early Harvard, the modern scholar questions all syntheses as contrived and relies on the integrity of his own research which need not result in any general concepts or contribute to any framework.

We were at this point when the student generation of the late 60's accused the university and its value-free learning of being immoral or, at best, a cop-out. Unfortunately, the proposals of these student groups did not come to grips with the basic dilemmas I have sketched. We are left today with memory of those attacks and the replay, as in the most recent Harvard curriculum proposals, of the last generation's attempt to meet both the need for validity, i.e., specialized knowledge and a meaningful framework in which to relate and interpret this knowledge.

Under these conditions, what can faculty development mean? Certain parameters have been achieved in our more than 300 years of history. College teaching is now a profession with standards and hierarchies which, of course, may be enhanced or weakened by the advent of collective bargaining. This profession operates within a pluralistic culture. There is no longer a New England way, as at early Harvard. Such frameworks for undergraduate programs as

can be established tend therefore to be idiosyncratic and personal. To create this unifying ideas or synthesis, to establish relationships between the fields of learning, some faculty members will need to assume the bad intellectual conscience of which Nietzsche spoke. A plan of faculty development might perhaps urge that older, more experienced faculty be entrusted with this generation's attempt at general education. They might be better able to rationalize the conflicting demands of specialized and general education and arrive at meaningful frameworks for undergraduate education.

Faculty development plans will also need to face the dilemmas created by declining enrollment and highly tenured faculty groups. The idea of reassignment in subject-matter field is repugnant to our convictions about the validity of specialized knowledge. We may need to consider, however, the emergence of a two-career life-style in the field of college teaching as in other professions. From our brief historical sketch we know that multiple teaching fields were common in the American college up into the 20th century.

Both these forms of faculty development obviously require strong administrative support. In addition, the faculty itself will need to be concerned about educational issues which arise outside their professional fields. Other forms of faculty development relate to the response to the somewhat self-satisfied vocationalism of the new college generation and to the challenge of collective bargaining, as well as to the problems of acquiring new pedagogical tools. There is indeed no dearth of forms of potential faculty development to meet these changing needs of society and of higher education today. This brief sketch of the past may be useful in reminding us that though faculty development is a modern phrase, the past was well acquainted with the substance of constructive change which the term implies.

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